

# COLUMBUS BUSINESS FIRST

## Porter Wright expanding to Chicago with acquisition of boutique firm

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Porter Wright Morris & Arthur LLP is entering the Chicago market.

The law firm is merging with Butler Rubin Saltarelli & Boyd LLP as of Feb. 1. Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

Bob Tannous, managing partner at Porter Wright, said the acquisition will expand the firm's services with a boutique litigation firm focused on the insurance and reinsurance industry. Porter Wright can in turn provide its larger suite of services to Butler Rubin clients.

"We were very impressed by their attorneys and practice and their clients. When you do these things, certainly you look for people who share similar cultures, business values and client service orientation," Tannous told me. "From the very outset, we felt just a real connection with the group of lawyers there."

The plan is to grow the Chicago office into a more full-service practice adding more transactional litigation and other skill sets, Tannous said.

"It gives us a broader reach, Chicago being the third-largest legal market in the U.S., and well-recognized around the world," Tannous said. "It allows us to extend our services ... really across the country."

Founded in 1980, Butler Rubin has 18 attorneys and 18 support staff based in the River North neighborhood in downtown Chicago. It has worked with Porter Wright on litigation in the past, and began talking seriously about a merger in September.

"We were always fiercely independent," said Butler Rubin's Bob Hermes, who will be part-



Anticipating the next move

Butler Rubin Saltarelli & Boyd is based in Chicago.

ner-in-charge of the Chicago office. "... With the retirement of our senior partners, we started to think if there was someone else with a practice and a mindset that would fit with us."

A large numbers of its clients are insurance companies and it works in complex dispute resolution, but Hermes said it now can extend other legal services, like ERISA and regulatory work.

"Whatever you read about that's roiling the financial and insurance markets, it'll create disputes we're likely to handle," Hermes said via phone. "Porter Wright has always had a vision of itself that makes sense to us. They fancy themselves, quite correctly I think, as the law firm for middle-market companies in the Midwest. Chicago is the economic capital of the Midwest, and if that's your mission you need to be here."

Shareholder litigation has also been a focus for Butler Rubin, which just concluded a decade of litigation arising from the financial crisis.

"Now what's bubbling up is litigation on insurance companies' risk on wildfire losses, as well as opioids and the fallout," he said.

Headquartered in Columbus, Porter Wright



Bob Tannous

has offices in seven other cities, largely focused on the Midwest, plus Washington D.C., and Naples, Florida. It opened a new office in Pittsburgh in 2017 and has been actively looking to expand.

It's the third-largest law firm in Central Ohio, with 121 attorneys and 100 support staff in the city, according to Columbus Business First research, with the local offices handling 30 different practice areas, including healthcare, energy, the public sector, banking and financial services and litigation.